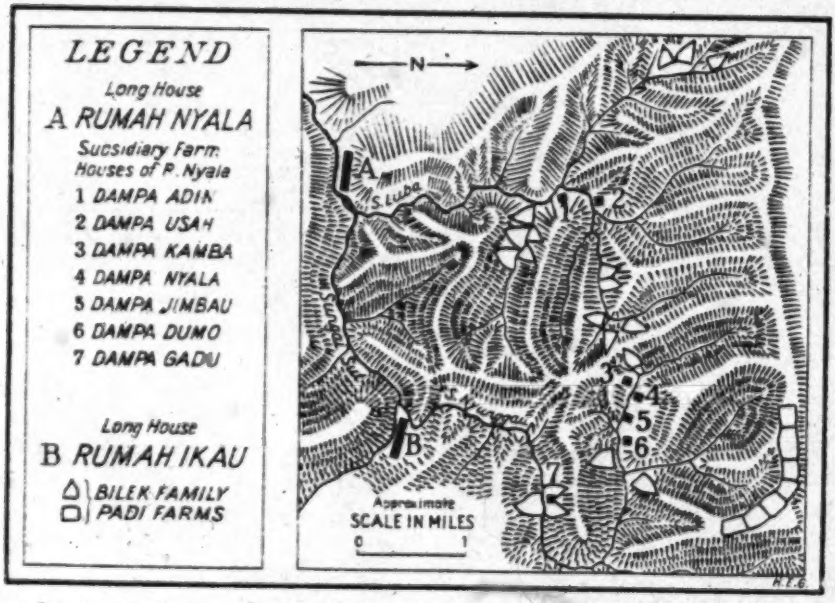
1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

361 The Sut, which drains several hundred square miles of hilly country is navigable
133 for over 40 miles by native canoe, and normally there was sufficient depth of water for me to be able to reach Rumah Nyala in a 36ft. *prau*, powered by a 22 h.p. out-board engine. The Sungai Sut was first occupied by the Iban in the 1890's, and for the most part the hills bordering its course are covered with secondary jungle; virgin forest being found only in the headwaters of its tributary streams. When I arrived at Rumah Nyala in 1949, I found that all 25 *bilek* families were following the *dampa* system, the whole community being concentrated in two minor tributaries of the Sut: the Sungai Luba and the Sungai Nyunggau. Neither of these streams was navigable by canoe; instead there were rough foot tracks along their courses and ridges. As will be seen from the accompanying sketch map, the two streams had a common watershed. The Sungai Luba fell within the territory proper of Rumah Nyala, while the Sungai Nyunggau (as already recounted in Para. 53), though coming under the jurisdiction of a neighbouring community, Rumah Ikau, had been made freely available to certain *bilek* families of Rumah Nyala, on a temporary basis. The people of Rumah Nyala had been farming in these two streams since 1944, and from the outset they had constructed and lived in locally situated *dampa*.



Sketch Map 3. The subsidiary farm houses (*dampa*) and *bilek* family *padi* farms (*umai*) of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, 1949-50
(See *Sketch Map* 1 for approximate location)

361 76. In the sketch map (Sketch Map 3) the locations of the various *dampa* of
103 Rumah Nyala for the season 1949-50 are shown. It will be seen that there were two houses in the Sungai Luba, and five in the Sungai Nyunggau. For convenience, each of these seven *dampa* has been named after one of its senior and founding members: but it must be stressed that this system of naming is very

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

largely arbitrary, for no *dampa* has a formally appointed head-man. In conversation, etc., the Iban identify a *dampa* by mentioning the name of any one of its members; as, for example, in the phrase: *dampa nida Kamba*, meaning the *dampa* of those *bilek* families living together with Kamba. There is no fixed rule however. *Dampa Adin* (Plate 3), was distant only about 40 minutes walk from the main long-house—a rough track crossing and re-crossing the tortuous course of the Sungai Luba. It is unlikely that a *dampa* would ever be constructed nearer than this to the main long-house, nor is it likely, even in this case, that a *dampa* would have been built, had not the families concerned decided, in advance, to farm the basin of the Sungai Luba for some six years in succession. Over this period of time, the fact that about 80 minutes is saved on each visit to the farm, becomes a most important consideration. Another four *dampa*, grouped within a few hundred yards of one another in the headwaters of the Sungai Nyunggau, were distant about one and a half hours from the main long-house, and were reached by crossing a saddle, about 400 ft. high, from the head of the Luba. *Dampa Along* (Plate 6), on the other hand, was approached by paddling up the Sut, and then walking up the Nyunggau from its mouth—again a journey of about one and a half hours. To travel from *Dampa Adin* to *Dampa Gadu* (passing all of the homesteads into which the community was divided) took about 100 minutes, and although inter-visiting was fairly common, some members of the long-house did not see one another for many weeks on end.

77. In Table 1, the various *bilek* families occupying the seven different *dampa* of Rumah Nyala during the season 1949-50, are laid out in detail. In each instance, the spatial alignment of the constituent *bilek* families is shown; the name given being that of the *pun bilek*, and the number referring to the position of the *bilek* family's apartment in the main long-house. (The *bilek* apartments in the main long-house have been numbered consecutively, beginning at the down-river end of the house.)

Table 1: Composition of Dampa Groups

I. *Sungai Luba:*

(a) *Dampa Adin*		(b) *Dampa Usah*	
bilek No.	*pun bilek*	*bilek No.*	*pun bilek*
14a	Nyuai	1a	Usah
6a	Adin	13	Majau
4	Sating		
22	Anjing		
15	Una		
12	Bunsia		
6	Limau		
14	Legan		
19	Ubong		

II. *Sungai Nyunggau:*

(c) *Dampa Kamba*		(d) *Dampa Jimbau*	
bilek No.	*pun bilek*	*bilek No.*	*pun bilek*
21	Kubu	3	Sube
18	Unyang		
17	Ja		
5	Kamba	(e) *Dampa Dumo*	
		2	Dumo

361 the settlement of Bawang Assan, they described the frequency of the movements that took place prior to the final settlements.

> "We moved first to Bukit Lan, but the Rajah wouldn't let us grow rubber,[1] so we had to break up our longhouse and move to Bukit Pantu where we lived in individual dwellings (langkau). From there we moved across the Leba'an to Sungai Jabai, then to Sungai Bilat, back to Tembawai Nyiur,[2] to Tembawai Pungkang[3] and finally to Nanga Bawang Assan. Only then did we build a permanent longhouse. That's the reason why we have many temuda'" ("previous farming sites").

243 178 Unlike the Ibans of the Sut and other new areas, who cultivate hill rice as described by Freeman (1955), those in the Sibu District mainly farm wet or swamp rice (padi paya'). The juxtaposition of several factors combined in the shift of the Ibans from the cultivation of hill to wet rice. The first and most obvious is the different lie of the land in the Rejang delta, where the relatively recent deposits of alluvial soils are flat, giving way only occasionally to hills and these generally at a [77] distance of several miles from the river banks. A second factor was the introduction of rubber and the Ibans' development of rubber gardens.

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[657] [829] [1]The Second Rajah's assignment of land for twelve miles below Sibu on either side of the Rejang has been rationalized in several different ways by the Ibans who were forced to move, this being one.

[103] [2]So named because of three coconut trees that still grow there.

[823] [3]The Ibans considered this site "hot" (angat) and unlucky because of an unusual number of illnesses and deaths, for which they had to abandon their houses (pungkang, "empty").